AN ESSAY UPON STUDY,

More particularly the

STUDY of PHILOSOPHY.

In a LETTER to a FRIEND.

——— *Spatio brevi*
Spem longam reseces; dum loquimur, fugerit invida
Ætas: carpe diem, quàm minimùm credula postero.

Hor. Lib. 1. Ode 11.

Doctrina sed vim promovet insitam,
Rectique cultus pectora roborant;
Utcunque defecere mores,
Dedecorant bene nata culpa.

Id. Lib. 4. Ode 4.

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MVSEVM
BRITAN
NICVM

PREFACE.

WHEN we would excel in Writing, and incline another to Think as we do, we endeavour to conduct his Mind insensibly thro' every Streight and Difficulty, to the end that when the Passions are once shaken, and moved out of their former Stations, they may be the more easily perswaded to fall on which Side the Leader pleases. But I have no Occasion for these little Arts; my Design is only to advise such young Students as myself, to enquire after some Method for their future Conduct in their Sudies; and to be very wary in the Choice of those Authors, upon which

they intend to beſtow their Time. I have thrown together a few Hints upon this Particular, and touch'd a little upon the Method, which, for want of better Inſtructions, I have been forced to preſcribe myſelf. Indeed, the Language is very ordinary; but if the Periods are not accompliſhed in all their Numbers, I hope the Senſe is intelligible; and Brevity and Perſpicuity are the utmoſt of my Pretenſions.

Of STUDY.

STUDY and BUSINESS are of ſo oppoſite a Nature, that all imaginable Care muſt be taken leſt they claſh and interfere with each other; yet is it not required, that either ſhould be any farther excluded, than to encourage the other: On theſe Conditions, Study will furniſh us with Knowledge for the moſt delicate Converſation, which will refine our whole Life, and beautifie all the Occaſions of Employment: It will therefore be neceſſary to ſeparate a ſufficient Part of our Time from the Buſineſs and Affairs of Life, that we may converſe with our ſelves, and in private. Nevertheleſs, our Studies ought not wholly to conſiſt in reading Books; we muſt add to them a diligent Obſervation of what is preſented before us upon the Stage of the World; and we muſt alſo converſe with learned and improved Men: But nevertheleſs, we muſt not addict our ſelves to any

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of theſe Ways, ſo as to loſe the Advantages of the other.

CONVERSATION will be of very great Aſſiſtance to our Improvement, if it encroach not upon thoſe Hours which are ſacred to Religion and Study; yet as we are permitted the innocent Liberties of Life, ſo one of our chiefeſt Studies muſt be, a Reflexion upon the paſt Occurrences of the Day, and a * Recapitulation of what new Things we have met withal in the World: For that Time which is ſpent in a particular Reflexion upon Things, and the PHÆNOMENA of the World, is EXPERIMENTAL STUDY, and produces as certain Improvement as Bookiſh Knowledge; to this Purpoſe we muſt therefore allot ſome Part of our Time.

But, before we ſet ourſelves to our Studies, if we expect any Suceeſs, we muſt begin with asking it of Almighty GOD; by this means, and a conſtancy in Religious Duties, we may accompliſh the End of our coming into the World, if it ſhall pleaſe Him to call us betimes out of it; for the beſt Eternity is purchaſed by the early Vertues of our blooming Years,

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* Μηδ' ὕπνον μαλακοῖσιν ἐπ' Ὄμμασι προσδέξασθαι,
Πρὶν τῶν ἡμερινῶν Ἔργων τρὶς ἕκαστον ἐπελθεῖν·
Πῇ παρέβην; τί δ' ἔρεξα; τί μοι δέον οὐκ ἐτελέσθη;
Ἀρξάμενος δ' ἀπὸ πρώτου ἐπέξιθι· καὶ μετέπειτα,
Δειλὰ μὲν ἐκ πρήξας, ἐπιπλέσσεο· χρηστὰ δὲ, τέρπου.

Pythagoras.

and

and by conſecrating ſome of that, which we call *the better part of our Life*, to the Service of our Maker: Let us then allot a Time for the more devout Service of GOD; and He, who was before all Time, will reward that Work with Eternal Happineſs.

The Intereſt of our Minds ought to be eſteemed far above that of the Body; wherefore, it is better to inform ourſelves what Truth is, than to regard our more corporeal Intereſts. For, by Study, a Man furniſhes himſelf with Power to do a greater Good hereafter, than his preſent Activity, with Neglect of Self-Improvement, can amount to. But however, at the ſame time that he contends to refine his own Mind, he may moſt effectually labour for the Good of Mankind; and upon this Account, we muſt endeavour to make our Lives as uſeful as we can to our Fellow-Creatures.

Our whole Life muſt be ſubſervient to our Improvement; Firſt, in making and collecting Experiences: Secondly, in rendring habitual, what we have gained a knowledge of before, but were not ſufficiently confirmed in: Thirdly, in our Diverſions and Recreations: Laſtly, in Things of ſuch Importance, as ought never to be neglected.

I diſtinguiſh my Collections only by very general Heads; as, Firſt, I diſtinguiſh from all others, my Collections of Books; dividing,

in the first place, General Experiments (more properly called Observations) from Particular, or Histories.

The General Experiments, I distinguish under the Titles of, 1. METAPHYSICAL Observations, or Observations of what most generally belongs to all sorts of Things. 2. MATHEMATICAL and MECHANICAL Observations. 3. Observations of the Abstract Properties of Bodies. 4. Observations referring to Celestial Bodies. 5. Observations of Inanimate Concretes. 6. Observations of the Bodies of Animals. 7. Observations of the Natural Faculties of Human Nature; and, first, of those Faculties, as they act towards the Good or Evil Things of this Life; and then our Observations of those Faculties of the Soul, as related to that Good, which is of a separate and Spiritual Nature. Lastly, Besides Observations upon the Rational Part of Discourses, sometimes there may be Occasion to make Observation upon the Passionate and Sensual Part of it; which I distinguish by its respect to Things Earthly, and Things Spiritual.

But the Delight which I take in the Contemplation of Nature, and the World, is highly augmented to me; because I enjoy it not only by the delicious Act of Sense, but the Meditations of my Mind: For the Objects of Sense, improved by Reasoning and Contemplation, frequently add to my Enjoyments a Pleasure

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that I have found inexpreſſible. How delightful is it, to have the Mind, when it is in a ſerene Poſture, freed from the Hurry of Buſineſs, and Tumult of Thought, and deliciouſly ſtruck with Objects about it, to make Sallies and Excurſions into all the Regions of Being, and returning to it ſelf laden with a freſh Delight! Theſe Meditations, if they riſe no higher than the Natural Philoſophy of Things; nevertheleſs, add a moſt Surpriſing Agreeableneſs to the Preſentments of Senſe: But much more, when the Mind takes its leave, as it were, of this World; and, by Divine Meditations, and Acts of Devotion, (for which I would have each Day of my Life challenge a good Portion) aſcends into the Places of Glory, and converſes with GOD, Spirits, and its own future Felicity, &c. But to return from this Digreſſion, to the Method which I propoſe to my ſelf, in the Purſuit of my Studies.

The principal Employment of my ſelf in Reading, is, carefully to ſift and examine what is Diſcourſed; that I may ſee its Evidence, and comprehend the full Reaſon of its Contexture. And, if while I ſet my Thoughts thus to work, I diſcover a Falſity in what is Diſcourſed; I ſet down (in ſhort) the Account and Reaſon of my Thoughts; or, if I think of any Objection which appears conſiderable, I ſet it down, in order to a pre-

ſent or future Solution. Again, If my Mind ſuggeſts what may tend better to explain, or more to confirm the Thing, than what I meet with in my Author, and which I judge worth taking Notice of; all theſe I write down, as Annotations upon that Book.

But if, upon Occaſion of what I meet with, my Thoughts make Excurſions into Meditations upon any Subject remote from what I am treating of; thoſe I refer to my Miſcellaneous Meditations; of which hereafter.

A want of Judgment in young Students, to make choice of Books ſuitable to their Deſigns, occaſions thoſe diſpiriting, and almoſt endleſs Difficulties, which frequently burden and confound our Studies. A vaſt deal of Miſchief is done to ingenious Spirits, meerly for want of knowledge how few there are of uſeful Books, and how to diſtinguiſh them, out of that great Multitude which is daily crouded into the World. This Evil is farther encreaſed, by reaſon of the Ambition (which Students generally have) of having a Library furniſhed with all Varieties: So that I have often ſaid, A Scholar hath diſpatched half his Work, and redeem'd the greateſt part of his Life from a Thraldom, not only unprofitable, but noxious to his Mind, who underſtands which are in each kind the beſt Books.

There are, in the ſeveral Parts of Learning and Knowledge, ſome few Books written by Perſons

Perſons of the braveſt and moſt ſearching Spirits, wherein is contained all the Knowledge which is conſiderable, of any Art and Science, in a little Room, and narrow Space; and yet delivered with far greater Clearneſs, Advantage, Force of Reaſon, Excellency and Nobleneſs of Style, than in all the Writings which Men of leſſer Parts have diſperſed. Concerning the ſeveral Branches of Knowledge which I know to be thus, I firſt pitch upon the Original Authors, from whom ſeveral Sects have derived themſelves: For that which was full of Spirit in the Original, hath abated and grown flat, and loſt its Savour in thoſe Spirits which poſſeſs it not, but by Derivation from others.

I add none to this Catalogue of Originals, if I judge that his Diſcourſes contain only ordinary Truths, or ſuch as one may know of himſelf, by a little Attendance, and without much Meditation: Or, if what is contained in him be leſs obvious, if yet it be nothing different from what I have already met with, I ſpare my ſelf the Trouble of Reading an Author, from whom I can expect little or no Improvement.

For it is not any trifling and ordinary Author on whom I can think good thus to expend my Thoughts and Time: And I make Account, that a multitude of Books once read over, leſs carefully, and, perhaps,

only to make ſome few Collections out of them, into our common Places, or Note-Books, is the worſt Courſe that Students can take, for Proficiency in good Literature. But I abundantly compenſate the Largeneſs of the Time which I ſpend in Reading, by a Method that I take, very different from our ordinary Way of Studying. For, out of that infinite Multitude of Books which are in the World, you muſt know, that there are very few which I have any Value or Eſteem for, or will ever ſpend any of my Time in: Some few, indeed, command an Acquaintance; in which, I believe, it may be ſhown, that all the conſiderable Learning that is in Books, may be comprehended. Some Students think to purchaſe an Univerſal Knowledge, by wandring from one Book to another, without reflecting how much Time is fruitleſly conſumed, which might be expended to excellent Purpoſes; this confuſes all their Determinations, and deſtroys every good Reſolution, for want of Order and Method to make it beautiful and intelligible.*

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* *Primum Argumentum compoſitæ Mentis exiſtimo, poſſe conſiſtere, & ſecum morari. Sed Lectio multorum Auctorum, & omnis Generis Voluminum, habet aliquid vagum & inſtabile. Certis Ingeniis immorari & innutriri oportet, ſi velis aliquid trahere, quod in Animo fideliter ſedeat. Nuſquam eſt, qui ubique eſt. Diſtrahit Animum Librorum Multitudo, itaque cum legere non poſſis quantum habueris, ſat eſt habere quantum legas. Probatos ſemper lege, & ſi quando ad alios divertere libuerit, ad priores redi.* Senecæ, Epiſt. 2.

Further,

Further, by the Fewneſs of my Books, I make Amends for the Quantity of Time I ſpend in the Examination and frequent repeated Readings of them; by doing which, in a few Books of this nature, I purchaſe to my ſelf a more perfect Knowledge, than by Reading a Thouſand of the others: And he who is well acquainted with what is contained in the moſt excellent Authors, hath all the Notions which lie ſcattered in inferior Writers, under Contribution to him; ſo that he hath no reaſon to learn of them, what his own Mind, thus made ſtrong and ſufficient, would better dictate unto him.

Whilſt I am thus ſtudiouſly converſant in theſe Authors, after having taken a ſufficient Account, in order to Examination, if I meet with any thing of a peculiar Rarity worthy particular remarking, to preſerve in my Remembrance, I have a little Book on Purpoſe for ſhort Significations of what is very Extraordinary.

After therefore having taken a ſufficient View of what is contained in the Diſcourſe of any Author, I then reduce him to a more diſtinct and accurate Examination; and if I have not thereby perfectly ſatisfied my ſelf, I take the Diſcourſe again into my Hands, to repeat the ſame Work, as far as there is need; and if it be worthy of ſo much Pains, I again and again repeat the Reading

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of it; that by ſuch frequent Repetitions, I may come to obſerve all that is contained in it, and to have the Notions better ſettled and digeſted in my Thoughts, and, as it were, transfuſed into my Mind and Temper.

Nor do I make Account, that, by this means, I uſe too much Pains and Care, or ſpend too much Time in the Books I read, and that I am likely thereby to become but a ſmall Proficient in Learning: For tho' all Men are equally deſirous of Variety, and tho' every Author may contain ſomething peculiar, and worthy Notice; yet perhaps, (generally ſpeaking) the Thing may be better done in what Books I have already furniſh'd my ſelf withal. An upſtart Writer upon an old Foundation, is frequently intermix'd with a multitude of other flat and inſipid Notions and Diſcourſes; ſo that what is peculiar, anſwers not the Bulk of what contains it. But if I chance upon any which contain a conſiderable number of different Notions from what I have already in the Books of my Library, and ſufficiently anſwerable in Proportion to the Volume; if it be an artful, well-contriv'd Diſcourſe; if the Spirit and Style which runs thro' it, repreſents a Perſon of a Worth far above what is ordinary; then I ſuper-add that Author to the ſelect Company of Books which I make: And afterwards, if I meet with another Author

thor who treats upon the ſame Things, but with a yet greater Force and Spirit; I again caſt out that which I was before poſſeſs'd of, and receive the new one into his Place.

But to return to the Reading of an Author: At the ſecond Review of a Piece, I collect out of it what Experiments and Obſervations, whether Natural or Moral, which I either meet with there expreſly ſet down, or have Occaſion given me to take Notice of; which (whilſt I am reading to another Purpoſe) I only briefly ſignifie, by little Marks ſet in the ſide of my Books with a Pencil, and afterwards collect at once.

As for the Annotations and Collections that I make, I never yet underſtood the Contrivance how to diſpoſe them, to my Satisfaction, under Common Places; I therefore collect them in a more Miſcellaneous Method, referring the Diſpoſal of them to my more leiſurely Meditations. In the mean time, it ſuffices me to take that Courſe which is moſt eaſie and moſt obvious.

But I have ſometimes thought of reducing my Obſervations to, *Firſt*, Obſervations of the Faculties of Human Nature of a Moral Quality. *Secondly*, Obſervations of Civil Life. *Thirdly*, Obſervations of Political States. *Fourthly*, Obſervations of Separated Spirits. Under all theſe Heads, except the Firſt, we may diſtinguiſh our Collections of parti-

particular Hiſtories, and our Obſervations of the Diſcourſes of others: But I reckon it will be convenient that thoſe be gathered in the ſame Book, which are Homogeneous to one another; not only in reſpect of the Matter, but alſo of the Principles upon which the Things are explained.

But ſome think this Method too burthenſome, and therefore collect their Obſervations juſt as they offer themſelves, without the Diſtinction of Heads; and ſupply the Uſe of Common Places, by Univerſal Index's, wherein all Things are gathered that belong to the ſame Subject, and particularly referred to.

To this Head, of the Study of Books, I refer what extraordinary MANUSCRIPT Diſcourſes of others I can procure; of theſe I am a careful Collector, tranſcribing them into Books diſtinguiſht according to the ſame Order: But if the *Manuſcript* be a mix'd Diſcourſe, I obſerve only that which is the principal Scope and Subject.

Thus, by a familiar and methodical Application of my ſelf to valuable Books, I endeavour to digeſt them into my very Mind, and let my Thoughts and Meditations ſo brood upon them, until they do, as it were, mature into the ſame Spirit with them. Theſe I reckon thoſe few Books, the conſtant Feeding on which tends to the true Nouriſhment

ment of the Mind, and makes what is in them turn *in Succum & Sanguinem*, in reſpect of which it is but a *Cachexie*, or, as it were, a depraved Blood, which is bred by an indigeſted Variety.

Secondly; Beſides theſe, there are ſome with whom I leſs frequently buſie my ſelf, ſuch as contain Notions which I judge truly gathered and diſpoſed, but wherein the Spirit and Style is more flat, and which want that generous and agreeable Reliſh, which is in Books the principal Thing of all.

And there is yet a *Third* ſort of Writers, whom I reckon a peculiar Sect, and of Ways different from thoſe which my Mind owns as true, or the Sentiments of my Soul can hold Correſpondence with; which, nevertheleſs, have deliver'd themſelves with the greateſt Advantages in their own Manner, and in which always there is a great deal of vigorous and excellent Truth hinted, tho' clouded with many other confuſed Notions, and wherein one may obſerve Eſſays towards what is great, and very peculiar Workings of the Minds of Men in the Inveſtigation of what is true; as alſo, very extraordinary Experiments of the Nature of the Mind and Spirit of Man. And the beſt of theſe peculiar Ways, is commonly the firſt Original and Head of each Sect; it

discovering a greater Force of Spirit in those that have been able to establish something in the World, in a Contrariety to Custom, than what is received.

* And for all other Authors, I take only a transient View of them; and if I discern any thing in them worth remarking, I collect it, whether it be Matter of Experiment, or Discourse, according to the same Method of my Collections out of others. And to ease my self of the burden of looking over many such Books, there are several of us, well acquainted with one another, who jointly do that Task; one bringing in the Account of one, another of another Book.

There is one Thing more which I reckon a Part of *Study*; and that is, all Conversation which is very serious; such as those agreeable Excursions of the Soul in the Contemplation of Human Nature, and the Infinite Wisdom of GOD, in the Creation.

For I satisfie not my self to observe only what occasionally each Day presents to me in the unfolded Volume of Nature, or those Persons I happen into Converse withal, or at least have Opportunity to view in their Actions and Discourses; but I determine with my self to make peculiar Trials in several

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* *Soleo & in aliena Castra transire, non tanquam Transfuga, sed tanquam Explorator.* Senec. Epist. 2.

Things,

Things, as Occaſion and Inclination leads me: Nay, I am ſo careful, that beſides the Books in which I collect the Experiments I make, I have others which contain only Queries, in order to the making ſeveral other Experiments about ſuch or ſuch a Subject.

Further, When I think fit to break off, and unbend my ſelf from my Studies, I ſuffer none of thoſe Thoughts which did before poſſeſs my mind, any longer to lie upon it; but I wholly abandon them, until I find a convenient Opportunity of returning to them; and, in the mean while, I give my ſelf up to a free Enjoyment of thoſe innocent Diverſions, which are the pleaſing Amuſements of my gayer Hours: Theſe equally preſerve my Body in a flouriſhing healthy Condition, and ſweeten the Retirement which is ſo neceſſary for my Studies, by expoſing the Vanities of the World in the leaſt Encounters. In this manner we may improve Solitude by Society, Society by Solitude, and enjoy the Pleaſures of them both in the moſt elegant Circumſtances of Innocence and Delight.

For I am no ſuch auſtere Profeſſor of Solitude, as to wiſh my ſelf entirely excluded from Society: I find a generous Satisfaction in the Converſation of Well-accompliſhed, Learned Men; not only that thereby I may participate of their Knowledge, and come to underſtand their general Principles as they diſcourſe

them, but that I may alſo have before me the Example of their Prudence, in their graceful Behaviour and Management of themſelves.

As for other Perſons in whom I obſerve not theſe Diſpoſitions, I endeavour to abſtract my Converſation from them, by living in the Familiarity of a few whoſe Principles I eſteem as truly noble, and worthy of my ſtricteſt Imitation: Yet neither is it Improvements in Learning alone, and Philoſophy, that I value, in the Choice of my Friends, but I alſo look for an univerſal freedom from any Intereſt; and inſtead of Moroſeneſs, that he be ingenuous, faithful, candid. And if I meet with ſome Perſons whoſe Temper, in their Studies, agrees with mine, but whoſe Humour is too grave and ſour for me, I endeavour to converſe with them in their own Way; and ſpend the Time in Philoſophical Diſquiſitions, and ſerious Diſcourſes; reſerving the Expreſſions of the Freedom of my own Temper for the Converſation of thoſe, who (in that Quality) are more agreeable.

Again, When I meet with Perſons whom I may receive Information from in ſome momentous Truths, I am careful ſo to apply my ſelf to them, as to give them Opportunities of inſtructing me perfectly in them; by a neglect of which, one may often forfeit ſuch Advantages, as the Study of a long Time

ſhall not redeem. But indeed, the Converſation which I enjoy, tho' among the moſt ingenious Perſons, ſhould be moſt properly reckon'd among the Diverſions of my Life; of which I will, in the next place, give you an Account, that you may ſee what Improvement I make even of them: Under which Head I include all ordinary Converſation, Obſervations that I make of Men and Things, with the Trials of ſeveral Experiments; various occaſional Inſpections into Books, Meditations, and Contemplations; all the Tranſactions of my Buſineſs, and the Recreations which I uſe.

In Converſation, I maintain a far greater deſire to be Inſtructed, than to Teach; and therefore I apply my ſelf very cloſely to thoſe I come amongſt; and to them whom I judge beſt furniſhed, I adminiſter what Occaſion I can of Diſcourſe, ſuitable to the particular Sciences, and Parts of Knowledge, wherein they excel. When any pretends to explain any Thing, I give him full Allowance to ſpeak out his Thoughts, by hearing his whole Account attentively, and without Interruption: Afterwards, if I cannot give Occaſion to purſue the Diſcourſe by Objections, I do it by further Enquiries pertinent to the Thing. Again, If any delights, in his Diſcourſe, to run into extravagant and unneceſſary Expatiations, and to introduce many Things impertinent

nent and foreign to the Purpoſe; I allow him to pleaſe himſelf, and return a Reply to that only wherein the Streſs of his Argument is contained. And when I undertake to give an Account of my own Thoughts, I do it with as much Brevity as the Caſe will handſomly bear, avoiding all ample and unneceſſary Excurſions upon which the Strength of what I am to ſay doth not rely. Another, and that a principal Way, wherein I delight my ſelf in the Time of my Diverſions, is, in Obſerving and making Trials and Experiments of the Things of Nature, Art, and the Moral Part of the World: For, for a Man in the Uſe of his Senſes to take a View of all the *Phænomena* of Nature, and to obſerve all the delicious Things which She hath provided to entertain even our moſt exterior Part, is a Pleaſure both full of Innocence, and yet of the moſt raviſhing Enjoyment. I am careful not to let paſs any thing of Importance, which offers it to me either in Converſation, or Obſervation of Things, and Meditations; but ſlip away unregarded, and make uſe of a little Table-Book, which I always carry about me, for ſome ſhort Memorials.

* At my Return to my Solitude from theſe harmleſs Indulgences, I ſet my ſelf to

* *Omnibus prodeſt relaxare Animum; excitatur Otio Vigor; & omnis Triſtitia, quæ Continuatione pertinacis ſtudii adducitur, Feriarum Hilaritate diſcutitur.* Sen. Rhet. Contro. Lib. 1.

reflect

reflect upon every Action, that I may ſpy out my own Failings in the Violation of any Rule which I ought to have obſerved; and I conclude, with propoſing new Reſolutions for my better Conduct in the ſucceeding Part of my Life; begging Pardon of Heaven for what was done amiſs, Aſſiſtance for what remains to be done.

I have but one thing more to mention, and that is, to ſpeak a Word or two to the laſt Propoſition which I laid down in the 7th Page, *viz. Of Things of ſuch Importance, as ought never to be neglected*; which I ſhall do, by tranſcribing one of the beſt Paragraphs I ever met with, tho' it be from an Author whom I durſt not name: He ſays,

" We are all created to ſerve GOD in " this World, and, by ſo doing, to enjoy " Him in the next. If we obtain that End " for which we were made, we ſhall be " eternally Happy; but if we fail of it, for " ever Miſerable. Now, as we cannot ſerve " GOD, and conſequently arrive at Ever- " laſting Happineſs, without the Aſſiſtance " of his Grace; ſo, are we not able to obtain " this Aſſiſtance without Prayer. He there- " fore who conſiders what it is to ſuffer the " Torments of Hell for a whole Eternity, " or to enjoy the Pleaſures of Heaven as

" long

" long as GOD Himself enjoys them,
" will need but a small Invitation to the
" holy Exercises of Religion, when he
" knows that there is no other Means
" for avoiding the one, or acquiring the
" other.

FINIS.